



Business Profile: ThinkFilm

by J.W. Arnold

Nearly everyone has seen the television blockbuster "The West Wing," an NBC drama that takes viewers behind the scenes at the White House. Well, behind the scenes at "The West Wing" is a small District production company that brings our nation's capital to life for the series.

On the day of our interview, the staff of ThinkFilm is busy watching the dailies from last week's shoot. President Stephanie Antosca and Vice President Jonathan Zurer are seated on the couch juggling phone calls and comments on the scenes shot at the Albert Einstein Memorial near the National Academy of Sciences.

"Did you know that there is a monument to Albert Einstein in Washington, DC?" Antosca asked. "I don't know if the viewers will recognize it, but at least it's something unusual." The scene ended up in the season finale broadcast just two weeks later in May.

For the past two seasons, Antosca, Zurer and ThinkFilm owner Joe Becker have been in charge when "The West Wing" crew came to town. They hit the big time, but it took a lot of hard work and many long hours for the 9-year-old production company.

Becker, Antosca and Zurer were working as freelancers in Washington when Becker decided it was time to incorporate and open an office.



A busy Jonathan Zurer coordinates many of the details for an upcoming "The West Wing" shoot in Washington, DC.

"We were so busy, we *really* needed an office," Antosca said.

In addition to commercial and corporate work, the team landed their first major
more *Think Film* on page 6

Inside:
 Steven Spielberg and Chris Rock Come to
 Washington p. 3, Behind the Scenes p.4,

Recent Projects Filmed in the District

Sum of All Fears (Feature Film) Paramount Pictures and Neufeld/Rehme Productions
Phil Alden Robinson, Director
Starring Ben Affleck, Liev Schreiber

Collateral Damage (Feature Film) Warner Bros. and Bel-Air Entertainment
Andrew Davis, Director
Starring Arnold Schwarzenegger, John Turturro, John Leguizamo

The Court (TV Pilot) Buena Vista Television
Rob Corn, Rob Scheidlinger, Producers

The Agency (TV Pilot) CBS Productions
Herb Adleman, Producer

Minority Report (Feature Film) Dreamworks Pictures and 20th Century Fox
Steven Spielberg, Director
Starring Tom Cruise, Colin Farrell, Cate Blanchett, Jenna Elfman

Spy Game (Feature Film) Paramount Pictures
Tony Scott, Director
Starring Robert Redford, Brad Pitt

What We Offer



From script to screen, the Office of Motion Picture and Television Development (OMPTD) provides production companies with a comprehensive range of services.

Production companies interested in filming in Washington, DC can send the office a script, storyboard or location breakdown and we will scout and photograph appropriate locations. We will match the demands of your script with our extensive photo library of thousands of images from all over the city.

For productions on a tight budget, we can recommend services

and facilities that are cost effective. Most publicly administered buildings in the District of Columbia may be utilized at no fee. Requests for the use of locations, police and fire department personnel, freelancers and equipment should be directed to this office.

OMPTD offers 24-hour staffing during actual filming and provides technical, logistical and research assistance throughout all phases of production. We monitor issues that arise as a result of production activity and act as ombudsman, facilitator and information source for the industry and general public. Our staff can accompany location scouts on their scouting trips within the city and introduce production staff to community leaders, officials and

others who can assist on a film or television project.

The office publishes a resource guide including listings of hundreds of businesses, individuals and organizations that service the film/video industry. While OMPTD does not handle casting, hiring of crew or project financing, we can provide production companies with the most current listings in our database.

To learn more about filming opportunities in the District or to download and complete an application to film in the District, visit our website: www.film.dc.gov. If you would like to be included in our industry resource guide and database or to request a copy of the guide, call OMPTD at (202) 727-6608.

Have you always wanted to be in pictures... or at least write them?

The Film DC Screenwriting Competition is currently accepting original, unpublished manuscripts written by Washington, DC residents. The first place winner will travel to Los Angeles, CA for three days this fall to visit the set of "The West Wing" and participate in a writer's session with the creators of the show. The first place winner will also be given an opportunity to make a guest appearance on the show.

Eighty-five percent of the script's locations must be authentic Washington, DC locations. Scripts will be evaluated on the basis of authenticity of locations, originality, structure, character development, dialogue, writing skill, commercial potential and the judges' impressions.

The first and second rounds of judging will be conducted by local panels of professionals from the Washington, DC film, video

and television community. The top five scripts from the preliminary rounds will be sent to Los Angeles, where a panel of entertainment professionals will judge them.

For more information about the competition and submission guidelines, contact the Office of Motion Picture and Television Development at (202) 727-6608.

Mayor Williams Watch

District Benefits from Motion Picture Industry



Mayor Anthony Williams and Chairman Linda Cropp chat with actor Chris Rock about his upcoming production "Black Sheep" that is going to be filmed in Washington, DC.

Mayor Anthony Williams greets Steven Spielberg on the set of "Minority Report." The production brought significant improvements to the Southeast DC neighborhood in which it was filmed.



Motion Picture Spurs Southeast Development

This June, Hollywood's finest invaded Capitol Hill to shoot scenes for the upcoming movie "Minority Report," starring Tom Cruise and directed by Steven Spielberg. However, the filming was not in the usual DC locations along the Mall, but in a local neighborhood in Southeast Washington.

The streets of 17th and C and the surrounding blocks were the focus of the new movie. In particular, a triangular park in front of the Boys and Girls Club on 17th Street, and a row of houses in the 1700 block of C Street were enhanced to prepare for the scenes. The improvements to the park include benches, play equipment, and landscaping. Also, two of the houses on C Street received synthetic stone fences to match their neighbors, and all of the houses got newly landscaped yards.

Movie production in the city generates significant economic benefits. "Between \$40-50 million are generated each year in the District from all types of productions," according to Crystal Palmer, Director of the DC Office of Motion Picture and TV Development, "Not only did 'Minority Report' have an economic benefit, but the production company made many improvements to the neighborhood and residents had the opportunity to meet the stars and director."

The scenes filmed in and around the park included children playing and walking down the street, a newspaper delivery boy on a red bike, police on Perchon horses, and men parachuting into the park. "Minority Report," is set in Washington, DC 80 years

more *Development* on page 7

Behind the Scenes:

California Producer Returns to DC for New Project

Network television viewers will get an inside view of the Supreme Court if producer Rob Corn is successful. Corn was in Washington, DC in April to film the pilot for "The Court," a series set in the nation's highest court.

This shoot marked Corn's third trip to Washington, DC for network television. He has also filmed in the District for an episode of "Chicago Hope" and the hit series, "The District."

"I was here the first time five years ago for Chicago Hope," Corn recalled. "It was fun because we got to work with Senator (Ted) Kennedy and Jack Kemp." The native Californian confirmed that the entertainment industry has long had a fascination with Washington, DC and the political scene. "I think there is a lot of interest in Washington, DC."

With one hit series already on the air about life behind the scenes at the White House, Corn said it was only logical that Hollywood would seek other opportunities in the nation's capital. In fact, another production company is also developing a series about the Supreme Court.

"The court was in the news nearly every day while the presidential election was being decided, so I

think it was pretty logical to develop a network series that goes behind the scenes," Corn said.

Corn's crew was on a very tight schedule and working around intermittent rain showers while filming in Washington, DC. "We only have a few weeks to get the pilot filmed. We had a crew working 24 hours a day, seven days a week," Corn explained.

the city, the National Park Service, the Capitol Police, the Library of Congress and the Supreme Court.

"Washington, DC is a beautiful city. If the story is set here, then obviously we want to be here, too. We can build the Supreme Court chambers in a studio, but there's no substitute for the Lincoln Memorial," he chuckled.



Behind-the-scenes action at the Supreme Court will provide the storylines for the latest television series to be set in the District.

"Hopefully, we will know by the second week in May if it will be picked up by the network."

If the series is picked up, that could mean more trips to Washington, DC for Corn and his crew. He said Washington can be a challenging city in which to film because he must work with so many different jurisdictions. In a typical shoot, he might be required to obtain permits from

Even if "The Court" doesn't make it to television, Washingtonians are probably familiar with Corn's work. Over the last 12 years, Corn has directed episodes of "Chicago Hope," "The District," the pilot for "NYPD Blue," "Cop Rock" and several projects for producer Stephen Bochko.

"I'm keeping my fingers crossed that I'll be back to DC soon," Corn concluded. 🍀

Latest Tom Clancy Adaptation Films in Washington

Washington, DC will again be the setting for “The Sum of All Fears,” the latest Tom Clancy novel to be adapted for the silver screen. Second unit crews were in the District this spring to shoot the successor to “The Hunt for Red October,” “Patriot Games” and “Clear and Present Danger.”

In a typically complex Clancy plot, CIA analyst Jack Ryan, por-

trayed by Ben Affleck, will be called into action after a nuclear bomb levels the capital of Chechnya. While politicians squabble over the blame, Ryan must stop the terrorists before they ignite another bomb outside the Super Bowl in Baltimore and start another world war.

Joining Affleck in the film are Oscar winner Morgan Freeman, Liev Schreiber, James Cromwell

and Bridget Moynahan. “Field of Dreams” director Phil Alden Robinson directs and Clancy is serving as executive producer. The production is based in Montreal, but has been filming on location across the country. “The Sum of All Fears” is expected in theaters next year. ☺

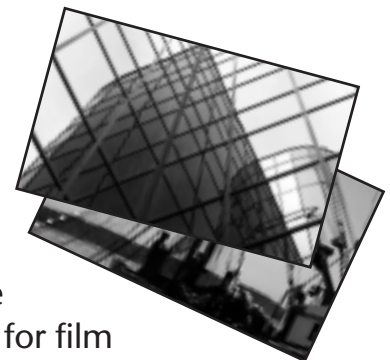
Local Restaurants Featured

Several local restaurants that have been featured in television and film productions were recently profiled in *Restaurants USA* magazine. Office of Motion Picture and Television Development Director Crystal Palmer was also quoted in the feature story. Palmer offered tips to restaurateurs in other cities who may wish to have their establishments used as locations for film projects. “In DC, we’re always looking for new and interesting locations to suggest to production companies,” Palmer explained. “Most major cities also have similar offices and this interview allowed me the opportunity to provide a few inside tips, as well as promote the District.”

Meant To Be In Pictures?

The Office of Motion Picture and Television Development maintains a file of thousands of suitable

locations for film and television production. If you know of a site that might make a great location, submit a good quality color photograph to the OMPTD for consideration. Your home or business could be in pictures!



Business Profile: **ThinkFilm**

continued from page 1



Stephanie Antosca and producer Lew Wells on the set of "The West Wing".

project, the feature film "Armageddon," in 1996 as a result of a contact Antosca had made as a location scout. A friend referred her to the production company to scout locations, but instead went ahead and hired the young company to produce the Washington, DC scenes of the film.

Antosca chuckled, "We were the first leg of the movie, so by the time they were done shooting the other scenes, a lot of our work ended up on the cutting room floor. Those are the breaks."

Word of mouth spread though. "You have a demo reel and a press kit, but rarely do you send it and have the door open if someone hasn't heard of you," Zurer explained. Shortly after finishing "Armageddon," the team was asked to work on "Dick," the 1997 comedy about Richard

Nixon. Then came the Disney television show, "The Jersey," "The West Wing," and "Spy Game," starring Robert Redford and Brad Pitt.

By the time crews come to Washington, DC to shoot, Antosca, Zurer and Becker have already been preparing for months. Often the producers send them scripts and they are responsible for scouting locations, hiring the camera crews, obtaining permits, casting extras, hiring the caterer, booking hotels and "just about everything in between," Zurer said.

"We are working solidly for weeks before the shoot," he added. And it doesn't stop when the crew arrives. "We will work around the clock for up to 10 days straight." On one recent shoot, Zurer was responsible for 300 extras and

150 crew. Because the shoot used a location in the Commerce Building, they had to film the scenes at night between 4 p.m. and 6 a.m. On another shoot, the crew had to avoid World Trade Organization protesters.

"Who would have thought the trick to filming in Washington, DC is working around the government protesters," he laughed. "They almost disrupted our motorcade scene. It's not like we're just setting up a camera to shoot the monuments..."

The long hours can take their toll on the enthusiastic producers, but there are rewards to working on high profile projects such as "The West Wing". Both have become acquainted with members of the cast and both offer pretty memorable anecdotes about their experiences.



The crew of "The West Wing" shoots at one of DC's many beautiful outdoor locations.

Zurer recalled a scene outside the White House with Martin Sheen. "We were on Pennsylvania Avenue and quite a crowd had gathered. We were on a tight schedule and we couldn't find Martin. It turns out he had walked over and was taking pictures with the fans who had gathered. He was having a conversation with them. He's really a genuine guy."

Executive Producer and Writer Aaron Sorkin also is the subject of one of Antosca's anecdotes: "We were filming the assassination attempt on the President (Sheen) and it was a pretty long night. Aaron thought it might pick the crew up to have a thousand Krispy Kreme donuts delivered to the set. The next night he had Ben & Jerry's ice cream sundaes delivered for 350 people."

The producers have also become acquainted with actors Rob Lowe, Alison Janney and John Spencer, and Oscar-winning director Tommy Schlamme. On one shoot, Spencer required emergency dental work, Antosca recalled. They found him a dentist and Spencer was so pleased

he returns to Washington to have all his dental work done. But these are just a few of the interesting stories.

"Actually, working on such a popular show has its downsides," Antosca said. "The work is very intense and it's nice to get some downtime.

We're on call 24-hours a day. Even if it's 7 p.m. in Los Angeles, it's 10 p.m. here when the shows call. We have to be available." The duo laughed as they pointed out that they often spend more time together than with their own families.

What does the future hold for ThinkFilm? Actually, "The West Wing" is a very small part of the company's work. The series only shoots in Washington three to four times a year for a few days

and they predict the show will visit less as the series continues.

"In Washington, DC, you can't survive solely on feature films and TV series," Zurer said. In addition to their film and TV projects, ThinkFilm will continue working on corporate image films, com-



The set of "The West Wing" in Washington, DC.

mercials and public service announcements. "It's a nice mix of large and small projects." But what does the future hold for ThinkFilm? The incessantly ringing phones in their downtown office indicate that word is out on this hot production company. ☛

Motion Picture Spurs Southeast Development

continued from page 3

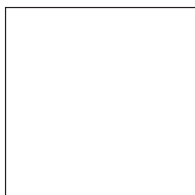
in the future at a time when law enforcement can predict when someone is going to commit a crime and arrest them before it

happens. A police officer (Cruise) finds himself hunted for a crime that he has not yet committed. These scenes are expected to

appear in the first ten minutes of "Minority Report" when it is released next year. ☛



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